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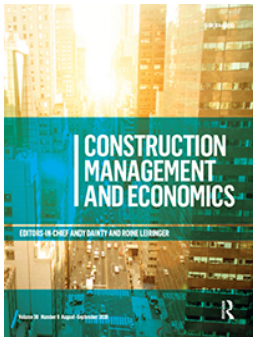
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Losing face from engagement – an overlooked risk in the implementation of participatory organisational health and safety initiatives in the construction industry

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ABSTRACT

Participatory designs are regarded as a positive way to develop and execute organisational health and safety interventions in the construction industry. While most studies focus on effect measures, little is known about process-related factors shaping the outcomes of interventions. In this article, the authors suggest that success in implementing organisational interventions is tied to microsocial mechanisms that affect whether engagement and creativity materialise into improvements. In this regard, interaction within intervention activities has been overlooked as relevant data sources. To exemplify how these may be useful, video-recorded interactions between participants in an intervention workshop setting are analysed. The framework focuses on threats to the participants' face (i.e. their public self-image), the participants' "facework", and on how social action is oriented to deontic, epistemic and emotional domains of order. The analysis shows how threats to the participants' faces arise in interaction, diverting the focus of discussions away from the aim of the workshops; developing initiatives to improve employees' health and safety. The analysis highlights that participatory interventions may be ineffective if potential face threats are not mitigated and managed actively. We suggest that the manager-facilitator-employee communicational design should be an area of increased focus.

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Introduction

Participatory designs are widely regarded as a positive way to develop and implement organisational interventions concerning occupational health and safety (OHS) and have long been recommended by both international bodies and researchers (ILO 2001, MacKay *et al.* 2004, Rivlis *et al.* 2008, van Eerd *et al.* 2010). This is also the case in the construction industry (e.g. Lingard *et al.* 2015, Dale *et al.* 2016, Brandt *et al.* 2018).

The participatory elements of organisational interventions have been described as important to ensure the relevance of interventions through the engagement of practical experiences and know-how from different parties – e.g. employees, managers and intervention experts (Kompier *et al.* 1998), and to promote engagement and ownership over change processes by involving employees (Roskam 2009). It has

been shown that employee influence in interventions is linked to the uptake of organisational intervention activities (Nielsen *et al.* 2007), as well as post-intervention autonomy, social support and well-being (Nielsen and Randall 2012). In the construction industry, participatory approaches have been applied to the implementation of OHS initiatives with various degrees of success. For instance, Lingard *et al.* (2015) show that participatory video techniques may assist in creating engagement and creativity in developing solutions for OHS problems, among both workers and managers (2015). However, several studies show that participatory interventions do not always deliver these positive outcomes. Both Brandt *et al.* (2018) and Dale *et al.* (2016) have recently reported high levels of engagement but no changes in physiological symptoms (pain and physical effort) as a result of participatory interventions among construction workers.

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Therefore, it is important to understand the micro-social mechanisms in participatory interventions that may prevent engagement and creativity from leading to OHS improvements (e.g. Reduced physiological symptoms).

A number of process-related factors complicate our understanding of *what's going on* in participatory organisational interventions. Recent studies among construction workers show that several factors pose challenges when developing OHS solutions, e.g. the participating employees' social identifications with team members rather than the organisation, time pressure, economic incentives, working-class masculinity and habituation of pain (Ajslev *et al.* 2013, Lingard 2013, Andersen *et al.* 2015). These studies, however, perceive workers' and managers' stances towards OHS development as driven by their personal resources, past experiences in the organisation, and expectations about the future (Nielsen *et al.* 2007). Less focus has been paid to the micro-social order and emergent character of participatory OHS processes in construction work as they play out in situated activities, that is, where the "action" of participatory interventions take place.

Understanding how the situated social order is negotiated is a central concern in the micro-sociological tradition (Garfinkel 1967, Goffman 1982, Sacks 1995), which has demonstrated how people are continuously oriented towards the socio-affective aspects of ongoing activities – including work interactions (Llewellyn and Hindmarsh 2013), and how this orientation shapes the trajectory of the interaction and thus its outcomes. Particularly central to the socio-affective character of interaction is the concept of *face*, that is, one's social regard or positive social value in the setting (Goffman 1982, Lerner 1996).

This article investigates how concerns about saving or losing face plays a part during a critical sequence of a participatory workshop, conducted as part of an organisational intervention concerning OHS among construction workers, and how the participants navigate the overt and potential threats to their public selves. In this endeavour, we employ the concept of *facework* (Goffman 1982) in a conversation analytical inspired framework of how human interaction is "anchored", not just in an emotional order, but also in deontic (power-related) and epistemic (knowledge-oriented) orders (Stevanovic and Peräkylä 2014).

Based on the analysis, we suggest that future participatory- and implementation research in the construction industry and elsewhere will benefit from an increased focus on how micro-sociological dynamics

can improve both participatory and communicative design, as well as the interaction between managers, facilitators and employees. In addition, we contribute to the scarce literature on social relations in the construction industry by exemplifying how negative communication and contradictory relationships between managers and employees can be counterproductive to OHS development and by suggesting paths for remedying this.

Participatory interventions

The engagement of – and communication among – different stakeholders in participatory processes is a frequently discussed concern when designing participatory interventions and processes. One challenge is that including managers in the participatory process affects the voice of employees, and that direct decision making and emancipatory potentials may thereby change drastically (Beirne 2008). This pose a dilemma as managers may be needed to provide the necessary resources – e.g. time, economy, materials – to make actual changes. Another challenge in handling the interests of different stakeholders is that participatory change processes may be delegated from upper management, who initiate the participatory process, to lower level managers or workers. This can contribute to a lack of shared organisational understanding for identified challenges and solutions because higher level management has not participated in intervention activities (Strumińska-Kutra 2016). On the other hand, Mikkelsen argues that in a participatory environment, managers and employees may act as co-learners in an empowerment process (2005). These arguments explain important aspects of why participatory organisational interventions may at times succeed or fail.

In recent research calling out for a better understanding of process-related factors with an impact on the success of organisational interventions, it has been emphasised that effective communicational practices within organisational interventions are imperative to success (Nielsen *et al.* 2010). Nielsen *et al.* briefly revisit the fact that communication influences how people make sense of events and eventually buy into them (p. 227). However, we found that particularly the aspect of communication in intervention processes is somewhat under-developed in contemporary intervention designs and research. Roskam describes that *"applying participatory action research requires ensuring that those participating in the research feel that the researchers have genuine respect for them and their experiences, that their opinions are valued, and that*

they are perceived as partners in the process" (Rosskam 2009). Other research methodologies set up a number of rules for conversation in different phases of workshops or conferences. These rules are developed with the aim of securing openness, creativity and engagement from participants and are based on principles for democratic dialogue (Gustavsen and Engelstad 1986). Even though conversational practices are discussed in some methodological texts, these do not explicitly describe the important potential gains or risks to the participants and to the organisational intervention process which is connected to the conversation in the participatory processes. We suggest that development in organisational interventions may benefit from a more explicit focus on the meaning and consequences of conversation-sequences as decisive in the outcome of participatory organisational interventions.

Face-work and three orders in the organisation of human action

Within construction research, studies founded in the micro-sociological tradition are rare. However, Mogendorff (2016) has suggested that applying this type of ethnomethodological or performative approaches may be of relevance to better understanding how expertise emerges and conflicts may be managed. Also, Gluch and Räisänen (2009) suggest that an increased focus on communicational practices may be a relevant step to address mismatches between policy and action within construction projects. As described, one particularly relevant characteristic to understanding communicational interaction within the micro-sociological approaches is the concept of *face*.

In his seminal work, *Interaction Ritual*, Erving Goffman unfolds the concepts "face" and "facework". His main point is that in every human interaction, people enact a "line". A line may be defined as; *"a particular pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts through which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants especially himself"* (Goffman 1982). A person's "face" is tied to the line as the positive social value one can effectively claim for oneself through the line that others assume one has taken – and allow to remain unchallenged. People are most often emotionally committed to the face, they are able to claim in a given context, and this is tied to their sense of self-esteem and self-value. In other terms face could be explained as the identity one seeks to assume for others to accept, whereas "line" is the things that one does to maintain face. For instance, construction workers will often positively

assert themselves and others through what has been termed "traditional working-class masculine traits"; self-reliance, strength, endurance, being professionally skilled, performing as a family provider and habituating pain (Wolkowitz 2006, Thiel 2012, Ajslev et al. 2013, 2016). If these identifications or "faces" become threatened in conversation, people experience a risk of losing face and with it their social value, self-esteem and self-value. Therefore people most often try to maintain their own face, while taking care not to challenge others'. A person maintains his or her face when the lines, they enact, are accepted by others. As long as a person remains in face, the person can be expected to feel comfortable. On the other hand, a person can be described as being in wrong face when they are spoken down to, down about or against. If the situation is not remedied, this person will often feel anxious, ashamed, embarrassed or in other ways bad.

When their face is challenged, people use face-saving practices to remedy the situation. They, for instance, avoid contact that could lead to challenges, but also withdraw or disengage from discussions, keep off topics that might reveal information that would be inconsistent with the face they want to maintain, or they will try to change the topic of conversation. Social convention will invite people to interfere in face-threatening situations and support the line of the one whose face is threatened. In this sense, studying face and face-work is to study norms and rules for social interaction (Goffman 1982).

Although widely recognised, the concepts of face and face-work have been criticised for being hard to pinpoint in analysis, thus becoming a product of the analyst's intuitive interpretation, rather than the visible concerns of parties in interaction (Lerner 1996, Samra-Fredericks 2010). In order to make up for this methodological challenge, both Lerner and Samra-Fredericks employ a conversation analytical (CA) approach to identify when interlocutors' face concerns become visible in interaction. One key principle of CA is the "next-turn-proof procedure" (Schegloff and Sacks 1973). This procedure refers to the phenomenon that recipients, when spoken to, will typically display their understanding of the previous turn(s) of talk in their response. When employed in analyses of face-work it becomes possible to identify and describe participants' changing concerns on a turn-by-turn basis. Basing analyses of interaction on the next-turn proof procedure as a preliminary step (Schegloff 1997) offers a strong validity by keeping the main analytical focus on observable events of the conversation that participants orient themselves towards on following turns in

the conversation. In this way, it becomes possible to decipher how utterances in the workshop are treated as either face-threatening or -saving.

An important resource for CA studies of face is the fact that interlocutors generally display a strong preference for agreement with the *preference structure* of what is being said (Sacks 1987). This structure does not refer to agreeing on the topic of what is being said, but with the expectations about upcoming responses designed into utterances. For example, “*will you make it tomorrow?*” projects acceptance of the request, while “*you won’t be able to make it tomorrow, will you?*” projects a declination of the request, but an acceptance of the speaker’s assessment, and thus a “preferred” response. Speakers typically design their turns to elicit preferred responses. Furthermore, preferred responses in interaction are typically provided in an unmarked and unmitigated fashion, while dispreferred responses are delayed or mitigated (Pomerantz 1984). When such delays and mitigations are present, or when respondents fail to display an understanding of the preference structure of the original utterance, this is typically taken by interlocutors as face-threatening (Lerner 1996). Pomerantz (1986) further provides the argument that *extreme case formulations* – situations in which interlocutors maximise or minimise the meaning of phenomena (invoking terms such as “always” “never”, “everything” or “nothing”) – should be perceived moves intending to create undisputable legitimacy regarding their claims. Such situations are also important as they indicate that something is at stake.

Another relevant concept for analysing the role of face in interaction is based on the observation that people pervasively orient themselves towards three interactional orders: the *epistemic*, *deontic* and *emotional orders* (Stevanovic and Peräkylä 2014). The *epistemic* order regards topics in which the participant has rights to- and can be expected to know about in relation to the other participants. Every time someone in conversation indicates what he or she knows or thinks that others know or do not know, she can be perceived as speaking in relation to the epistemic order. The *deontic* order addresses the participant’s rights or capability to force other participants to submit to actions or demands. As such, this has to do with power, control, and asymmetric power-relations that unfold in conversation. This is made visible when the speaker asks for actions, make decisions and enact actions. Deontic status has to do with the participants’ common history and their relative positions in societal and organisational structures. The *emotional* order is

about emotions that participants are allowed to or expected to express in relation to others. This has to do with emotion, affection, and involvement. In this regard, there are certain social conventions in all social contexts. As a relevant example, professional roles are most often tied to an “affective neutrality” (Stevanovic and Peräkylä 2014). Upholding the emotional order is an important part of being perceived as a moral member of society and/or the group. Emotional status refers to the socially shared expectations that participants have towards a person based on their mutual experience and on that person’s position in a certain domain of experience. Emotional status can be expressed verbally and nonverbally. Here, language use, grammar, posture, and facial expressions matter when studying bodily expressions of emotions in interaction (e.g. Local and Walker 2008, Ruusuvuori 2007, 2012, Peräkylä and Sorjonen 2012). For example, a slumping bodily posture can indicate an orientation to potentially having lost face (Goffman 1982, Clift 2014). For each of the three orders, participants in interaction can be said to take a certain stance and hold a certain status: a person’s stance is the way they present themselves – in face-work-terms. It is parallel to the line a person is taking in particular conversation, hence we employ the stance concept in the analysis. A person’s *status* refers to the position a participant is oriented to as holding within a particular order and is thought to be based upon the person’s personal history shared with the others in conversation. Thereby, the way interlocutors position themselves relative to each other in relation to the three orders functions to negotiate their relationship as symmetrical or asymmetrical. For persons with a low status in some order relative to their co-participants, being met with acts which level out asymmetry are usually oriented to as face-saving while acts that emphasise the relational asymmetry are taken as face-threatening (Stevanovic 2015). Typically, there is a high level of consistency between status and stance within the three orders. However, this is not always the case.

It should be noted that in order to make sense of what others are attempting to do in interaction and respond appropriately, interlocutors rely on both sequential elements of talk (such as the next-turn proof procedure and preference) and the epistemic, deontic and emotional orders. For example, declaratives (e.g. “he got the job”) are typically understood as assertions if the speaker is perceived to hold a higher epistemic status in relation to the subject than the recipient, and as questions if the statuses are reversed (Heritage 2012). This means that it is also analytically relevant to attend to how these various aspects of the

interaction come together in shaping the turn-by-turn-development of specific sequences.

Therefore, in order to show what risks are related to loss of face are undertaken by participants during the workshop, the analytical framework, we employ, focuses on the participants' orientations to face as they become visible through the next-turn proof procedure, how preference structures are set up and responded to, and how their relative statuses within the three orders are negotiated.

Methods

For this study, we draw on empirical material collected as part of a research project, which followed a participatory organisational intervention targeting physically straining work-tasks in the Danish construction industry. The methods for the full intervention study can be consulted in (Brandt *et al.* 2015).

In brief, the participatory programme consisted of three workshops held approximately one month apart. The workshops were organised in a three-phase structure inspired mainly from action research (Nielsen and Svensson 2006). A total of 80 male full-time construction workers (aged 19–67 years) were randomised at the cluster level (gang) to an intervention consisting of three workshops (seven gangs and 32 workers) or to a control group (eight gangs and 48 workers). All were ethnic Danes. In total, 19 workshops with a total of 32 participating construction workers, four foremen and seven OHS managers were video recorded for subsequent analyses except for two workshops which, due to technical malfunction, were only audio recorded. Approximately 29 hours of workshop material was produced. The participants were recruited in collaboration with the construction industry's safety

and health preventive service, and were from some of the largest construction entrepreneurs in Denmark.

The first workshop, one of which our material is from, was designed with inspiration from the *future workshop* concept, which usually also consist of three phases: (1) critique, (2) utopia and (3) realisation. In our design, however, the critique phase was replaced by a phase where the most physically strenuous tasks – based on technical measurements and video recordings – were presented to the participants, and the participants were encouraged to decide which tasks they would like to work towards modifying over the course of the intervention. In the utopia phase, the participants discussed the selected work tasks with exclusive focus on how the tasks could be carried out in the best of all worlds. In the realisation phase, participants were asked to consider possibilities and barriers to reach the utopias and to write down an action plan.

In the ensuing analysis, we focus on a particular sequence of interactions occurring within a longer workshop. Attending the workshop were two researchers who facilitate the workshop as well as author the article, OHS manager I and II, concrete worker I–V and finally, there was the concrete foreman, who initially planned to participate in the workshop, but had to work elsewhere on the site just as the workshop was about to start. The focal stretch of interaction comprises foreman's return to the workshop room.

. Attendants:

- Facilitator/researcher I
- Researcher II
- OHS manager I
- OHS manager II
- Foreman
- Construction worker I–V



Attendants:

- Facilitator /researcher I
- Researcher II
- OHS manager I
- OHS manager II
- Foreman
- Construction worker I – V

The chosen case is scientifically relevant in two ways. First, the excerpt is relevant because it shows what we would call a turning point in the workshop, i.e. a situation that has a critical impact on the outcome of the intervention process as a whole. These, often brief, situations happen in all types of participatory processes, and we argue that more attention should be paid to these in intervention research. The other sense in which the excerpt is relevant, is as a paradigmatic case (Flyvbjerg 2006) on employee-manager relations in the construction industry, which can provide theoretical insights relevant for understanding similar situations in these types of settings in general. Thiel (2012) exemplifies this relation when describing how many workers perceive managers as disrespectful in their very direct form of delegating work through orders rather than requests, and in failing to acknowledge the workers' knowledge and skills. This relationship has recently been described as an "us and them relationship", where construction workers identify themselves in opposition to their managers and employers (Paap 2006, Thiel 2012, Andersen *et al.* 2015).

The analysis was developed through repeated, focussed viewings of the video recording, noting analytical points in relation to an iterative working transcript (Mondada 2007). These analytical points were discussed in relation to the relevant literature on facework, leading to development of the analytical framework presented earlier. Throughout the analysis, we employed both a focus on how the interaction was organised in turns based on the next-turn proof procedure and how the social dynamics within the interaction could be further elucidated by considering the extant literature on facework in interaction. We also attended to the participants' bodily expressions (such as gaze, nodding and posture) in certain parts of the sequence where these expressions seem particularly relevant for the way the interaction progresses. It should be

noted that we do not apply a strict CA approach, as we do in some places draw on theory and contextual knowledge to substantiate claims.

While the analysis was performed on the Danish-language data, the data has been translated into idiomatic English for presentation here. The transcriptions follow the Jefferson style conventions (Jefferson 2004), which enable notation of various relevant details about how things are said and responded to, such as pauses, overlaps and words uttered with emphasis.

Analysis

Before this particular sequence, the participants and facilitating researchers had been engaged in identifying tasks which required particular physical exertion and discussing possible ways to reduce this exertion. The participants decided to focus on the issue of having to use heavy steel shuttering (shuttering – the mold) when casting concrete, where especially assembling the shuttering required heavy manual work. Before the selected sequence Construction worker I and Construction worker IV related first-hand experiences using aluminium shuttering, which, according to them, reduces physical exertion compared to steel. Supported by the researchers and OHS managers, the topic was discussed for approximately 20 minutes during which several participants expressed positive expectations towards the ability of aluminium shuttering to reduce exertion. However, Construction worker IV and Construction worker III also expressed that "the high lords" (top-level management) would not support the idea, as it could be costly. At this point, the researchers and OHS managers encouraged the participants to continue their engagement with the idea so that an action plan concerning potentially implementing the solution could be developed. However, before the plan was developed, one of the OHS managers energetically left the room to engage the site foreman in the discussion.

In the following excerpts, we see the foreman's response to the employees and follow the ensuing discussion.

Transcription legend

(.)	audible break (". " indicates short break, numbers indicate seconds)
(())	transcription comments
[start of overlapping speech
=	no pause between speaker turns
° °	phrase spoken at low volume
CAPITALS	sounds are louder than those surrounding it
?	sharp rise in intonation

Excerpt 1

((OHS manager I returns with the foreman. He says 'hello' and unzips his reflective vest))

01 OHS manager I: well now I've had the explanation (2.0)

((OHS manager I looks around at the participants in the room))

02 OHS manager I: Foreman tells me that when you make large shuttering, then
aluminum won't really hold ((glances at Foreman))=

03 Foreman: =yes yes=

04 OHS manager I: =aluminum that's for when you make foundations and eh [
smaller shuttering

OHS manager I reports having received an "explanation" from Foreman outside the workshop room (turn 1). She expresses that the explanation is founded in practical knowledge and the material character of aluminium shuttering that the rest should now hear. At the end of her turn, OHS manager I turns her gaze towards Foreman. One common function of gaze is to direct the selection of the next speaker (Lerner 2003), and here, the glance is taken by Foreman as a request for confirmation which he produces. OHS manager I continues, reporting the explanation, describing aluminium as reserved for other tasks than the one discussed by the employees. At this point, the conversation orients towards the epistemic order, where knowledge about the practical work is of central importance (Stevanovic and Peräkylä 2014). OHS manager I takes a downgraded epistemic stance through her initial utterances and alignment check towards Foreman, which positions him as holding a superior epistemic status to the other participants. Thus, by being formatted as an account for why the aluminium solution is inadequate, the "explanation" functions as a mitigated rejection of the suggestion. Such accounts are important as those who fail to provide them when rejecting a suggestion may be viewed as "hostile" or "careless of the face" of their co-interactants (Heritage 1988, p. 138). However, in order to be face-saving for the recipients, the account must warrant the rejection by referencing inapplicability, rather than simply unwillingness – what Heritage calls a "no-fault" account. Here, the claimed inappropriateness of aluminium shuttering is designed as such an account. Still, the claimed inappropriateness poses a potential face challenge to the workers – in particular Construction worker I and Construction worker IV, because it opposes their earlier epistemic stances as experienced and knowledgeable about employing aluminium for similar tasks. At the same time, the first turn also refers to OHS manager I having had an explanation to a question, and judging by the answer, she must have asked something along the

lines of "why are we not employing aluminium shuttering?" This means that already at this point, the foreman may have experienced a challenge to his epistemic stance of being a "capable work leader and decision maker", putting his face at stake.

Excerpt 2

04 OHS manager I: aluminum that's for when you make foundations and [smaller
shuttering

05 OHS manager II: [we're
talking about hand shuttering=

06 Foreman: =hand shuttering yes ((nodding)) =

07 OHS manager II: =in aluminum you can't get a major shutter in aluminum

08 Foreman: no

09 OHS manager II: that's not what we're talking about (.) because if we were
talking about major shutters, then they would not be
carrying the shuttering themselves=

10 OHS manager I: you can't even put aluminum and the others together?

11 Foreman: yes, you can do that=

12 OHS manager II: =you can do that=

13 OHS manager I: =that you can do

Turn 5 sees OHS manager II, the other OHS manager, formulate what is being talked about as "*hand shuttering*", partly in overlap with OHS manager I's report. OHS manager II's turn is oriented to by Foreman as a request for confirmation, which Foreman answers in line with its implied preference: that OHS manager II's explanation is on-topic. As an additional note, Foreman's nodding here occurs simultaneously with his utterance, which is likely to be taken as emphasising his response (Aoki 2011). Thereby, Foreman confirms the allusion in OHS manager II's question that Foreman's critical stance towards the employees' suggestion is caused by a misunderstanding. As such, OHS manager II challenges the epistemic soundness of the reported explanation, but in a mitigated way that also displays an orientation to Foreman's face. At the same time, OHS manager II is providing a defence to the workers' faces – as skilled and knowledgeable workers – through his epistemic correction or specification of the topic (turn 9). This also maintains the relevance of the aluminium solution to reducing physical exertion.

The reference to "*hand shuttering*" in turn 5 introduces a different distinction to the interaction than OHS manager I's "*large*" and "*smaller shuttering*" (excerpt 1), instead focussing on how the shutters are handled. In contrast with "*hand shuttering*", OHS manager II in turn 7 asserts the unavailability of aluminium major shutters (a type of shutter which can only be moved by crane), which Foreman confirms – thus supporting OHS manager II's epistemic stance as knowledgeable in the matter – and OHS manager II continues to describe how

major shutters would be off-topic due to not being strenuous to work with, as they cannot be manually handled. Besides providing a defence to the workers' faces, OHS manager II's specification potentially becomes a challenge to Foreman's face, as OHS manager II questions the epistemic soundness of the explanation provided on his behalf by OHS manager I.

Next, OHS manager I asks about the possibility of combining aluminium and steel, and while the question format projects a negative response, the possibility is acknowledged by Foreman and OHS manager II. This underscores OHS manager I's low epistemic status on the matter.

Already at this point, more is going on than the discussion of when, and for what, aluminium shuttering can be used. The foreman's initial epistemically based claim has been put into question by OHS manager II's specifications, potentially challenging the foreman's face, as the ensuing analysis will further clarify.

Excerpt 3

14 Foreman: ((briefly nodding and jerking his head throughout his turn)) but when we do formwork then it's always steel (.) because there's such a huge moulding pressure on it (.) then it's always steel shuttering and it's crane shuttering (.) you use a crane (.) but when you assemble them then, of course, you have to pull them (.) to connect the flakes
((Foreman looks at the facilitator and nods))
15 Facilitator: ehm (0.5) is that what we're looking at that's not what we're looking at (.) or how? (2.0)
16 OHS manager I: [yes
17 Construction worker III: [yes
18 Construction worker IV: [those are the ones we're assembling yeah
((OHS manager I, Construction worker III and Construction worker IV nod))
19 Facilitator: yes okay ((gazes at Foreman))
(4,0)
((Foreman and Facilitator nod at each other))
20 Foreman: "yeah"

After having confirmed in the previous extract that combining aluminium and steel was possible, Foreman asserts that steel shuttering is "*always*" used in "*formwork*" and provides an account for why (turn 14). He describes the shuttering in use as a "crane shuttering" (in contrast to OHS manager II's "*hand shuttering*"), thereby highlighting the crane's contribution to the task, while only describing one physical (and thus potentially exerting) aspect of the task ("*connecting the flakes*"). Thereby, the employees' assessment of the task as strenuous is downplayed, although we cannot say whether this effect is intentional, or whether it is picked up by the other participants as a deliberate "move". Foreman also refers to a "usual practice" ("*when we do formwork*"), which is a conversational move tying together the deontic and epistemic orders, as usual practice may be founded on both the best available knowledge but may also be an invocation of a norm for practice. He then connects this to the epistemic claim about steel being able to handle a higher level of pressure. The foreman's deemphasizing of the physical aspect is both a diversion of the original discussion – implying that Foreman is defending his face as a capable foreman (Goffman 1982) – and a challenge to the employees' and other participants' assessment of the task as strenuous, and thus to their face. His recognition of the employees' project is a minimal extreme case (Pomerantz 1986), but arguably visible in Foreman's formulation "of course you have to pull them" – an inference to the employees' concerns since this part of the task has not been mentioned as strenuous while Foreman has been in the room. Thus, his emotional stance towards the employees could be described as distanced. However, he seeks to maintain a superior epistemic stance by his use of extreme case formulations ("it's always steel", "it's always steel shuttering") and



unmarked assertions about how the work is performed ("it's crane shuttering").

Furthermore, nodding at the other participants at the end of one's turn, as Foreman does here, is typically taken as a request for an indication of agreement (Heath 1992, McClave 2000). By turning and nodding towards the facilitator, Foreman next projects him as the upcoming speaker. These actions imply the upgraded deontic stance Foreman is taking by seeking to pace the discussion towards a termination, and thus a rejection of the employees' suggestion.

The facilitator takes his time, showing some discomfort in this selection by the initial "ehm". Then on turn 15, the facilitator displays some confusion over both the correctness of the foreman's statement, and the topic of conversation. The foreman's selection of the facilitator as next speaker is responded to by the facilitator as challenging the relevance of the topic under discussion. This is seen as he seeks to perform defence of the relevance of the topic, by employing his deontic status as a facilitator to elicit an epistemic clarification on the matter. During the next four turns, OHS manager I and participants Construction worker III and Construction worker IV show that the topic is indeed understood in common to be crane shuttering. The four-second break – as described by Pomerantz (1984) – Indicates that it takes time for the participants to analyse appropriate responses to the situation. The facilitator's attempt to maintain life in the development process that the participants have worked with, has

little effect as he cannot engage from an epistemic nor deontic expressive order.

Excerpt 4

```
21 OHS manager I:      ((body slumping over the table, gazing at Foreman)) and
                        the agreement is I reckon that when we do foundations
                        and all those things, then it's aluminum shuttering
                        we'll use and so on=
22 Foreman:           = ((looking down at OHS manager I)) as far as possible
                        it's aluminum shuttering=
23 OHS manager II:    =yeah, then it's hand shuttering
24 OHS manager I:     [ okay
25 Foreman:           [ for foundations right if there's no crane available
                        (.) so you have to run around and drag it

((Foreman nods and gazes from Construction worker I to Construction worker IV.
Construction worker V is currently staring down at the table.))
26 OHS manager I:     so you could say that when it's large walls and such,
                        then the solution is not aluminum shuttering? (1.0)
27 Foreman:           "correct" ((nods while gazing around the room))
                        (7,0)
28 Construction worker IV: mmh ((gazing at table))
29 Foreman:           yes ((gazing at Construction worker IV))

((Construction worker III nods, turns his head towards Construction worker IV,
Construction worker IV gazes towards OHS manager I))
```

Next, OHS manager I seeks to summarise the conclusion to what just happened. In this way she pays attention to the situation that again at this point their faces are at risk; if all they have discussed and worked with is going to be disregarded this will be challenging to further progress in the workshops. At the same time, she seeks to secure a testimony from the foreman that aluminium shuttering is used whenever possible. In this way, she starts performing face-work for the facilitator, herself and the other participants, who have invested face in developing the idea of



aluminium shuttering. She displays bodily signs of being in an awkward situation. Her body is slightly bent forward and she is not seeking eye contact with the foreman. This awkward position stands in contrast to her displays of enthusiasm up to retrieving Foreman. In turn 22, the foreman refuses to give a firm promise that he would later have to go back on. OHS manager II then in turn 23 repeat the foreman's half promise. The foreman (turn 25) provides a conditional answer and thereby denies all current threats to his line of a capable and knowledgeable decision-maker.

When OHS manager I next asks if aluminium shuttering should not be used for "*large walls and such*" (l. 26), the question displays a strong preference for confirmation, and may be perceived as a way of defending the participants' faces by seeking to modify the foreman's dismissal of the aluminium suggestion. After a confirmation token from Foreman (l. 27), a long silence of seven seconds follows. Towards the end of the excerpt, Construction worker IV provides only a minimal and somewhat ambiguous alignment token while gazing at the table (l. 28), which Foreman responds to, again projecting to end this part of the discussion. Taken together, the long silence, the minimal responses and deflated body language (Clift 2014) leaves the impression that the discussion has all but lost its momentum. Then something happens.

Excerpt 5

30 OHS manager I: so it's something with lifting techniques and [crane capacity
31 Construction worker IV: [((clicks pen)) I will just say that already now I've learnt something because I didn't know that aluminum shuttering can't take the pressure=
32 Construction worker III: =no ((shakes head))=
33 Construction worker IV: =because I thought it was made TO be able to take the pressure because again (.) no one tells us anything (.) I mean (.) I just want aluminum shuttering because it's lighter but if it won't hold I didn't know nothing about that ((shrugs))=
34 Foreman: =I will say if a large form like we have out there is to be made in aluminum then it would take a LOT of crossbars (.) [TERRIBLY many
35 Construction worker IV: [again I didn't know that ((shakes head))
36 Foreman: and then it all becomes very heavy

On turn 30 OHS manager I formulates the upshot of the conversation so far as being that the participants should focus on "*lifting techniques*" and "*crane capacity*". In this, OHS Manager I further elaborate on her statement in turn 26 where she suggests acceptance of the foreman's epistemic claims. This suggestion functions to move the conversation on without further challenging the foreman's face on the epistemic stance he is taking. This can also be seen as a

piece of facework to prevent further challenging situations that could further upset the expressive order and incur further facial damage to either participants (Goffman 1982). However, Construction worker IV next takes some conversational "run up" (Sacks *et al.* 1974), through his "*mmh*" (l. 28, previous excerpt) and by audibly clicking of the pen (Stevanovic and Peräkylä 2014). He then takes over the turn and denies OHS manager I's projected change of subject. At first (turn 31) he positions himself as unknowing about the issue. As such; he takes a low deontic, emotional and epistemic stance, caring to not positioning himself as an authority on the matter. However, at the same time, this also becomes a questioning at the epistemic level, as he raises doubt about the rationality of producing shuttering that would be unusable in use. This is also how we on following turns will see the foreman interpret the matter. Construction worker III, on the turn 32 supports these points with an alignment marker ("*no*") and a head shake for emphasis (McClave 2000), thereby giving face to the line that Construction worker IV is taking. Construction worker IV is at the same time defending his own face as a capable, educated construction worker, as he earlier, before the foreman arrived, talked about his experiences with aluminium support beams. On the 33rd turn, Construction worker IV repeats and specifies his point. He further makes the extreme case formulation that "*we're not told nothing*" implying that "*they*", the workers, are generally in a powerless position without responsibility for this face-challenging situation. The extreme case formulation is a way of making highly unchallengeable points (Pomerantz 1986, Sacks 1995). As such, the claim that the workers are told nothing is at the same time an account for making the suggestion and a redirection of the responsibility from the workers making the suggestion to others. At the same time, it is clear that Construction worker IV, if the foreman's statements remain unchallenged, is out of face in his line as a capable worker. This restatement and specification also implies that he is still not satisfied with the epistemic closure to this matter. Thus, while his turns are seemingly formatted as a number of concessions which acknowledge Foreman's superior epistemic status, Construction worker IV's framing of Foreman's accounts as "*news*" also has the hearable implication that Foreman's position is surprising. Foreman does not directly ratify Construction worker IV's turn as a concession but rather asserts that making a large form out of aluminium would be problematic due to the "*TERRIBLY many*" crossbars required (another extreme case formulation: Pomerantz 1986),

again accounting for the infeasibility of the employees' suggestion. The provision of another account which partly acknowledges Construction worker IV's perspective (by the softening "I will say" and by providing a more conditional rejection of his suggestion than his previous accounts) implies that Foreman orients to Construction worker IV's turn as a challenge. By making his challenge indirect but inferable, Construction worker IV mitigates the face-threatening potential towards Foreman, while managing his own face. Interestingly, he next not only takes a downgraded epistemic stance (restating his lack of knowledge regarding the problem for a fourth time in line 35), but also outlines an asymmetry in the emotional order by, at the same time, taking a downgraded epistemic stance and his defeatist body language, which contrasts Foreman's direct responses and dominant body language. However, while Construction worker IV is arguably doing "being out-of-face" (Sacks 1995), the discussion is not over yet. *(at this point our analysis skips six lines of conversation concerning the characteristics of aluminium shuttering, which do not add significantly to the analysis)*

Excerpt 6	
37 Construction worker IV:	I just thought it was made I mean so the framing was placed more closely and thus able to TAKE more pressure
38 Foreman:	you can do that with ordinary small walls you can easily cast small walls but when you're up in 5-6-7-8 meters height then (.) you can't make them from that (1.0) or you can but=
39 Construction worker IV:	It's not something they teach you at school, and it's not something I've tried out here [so I didn't know that [aluminum couldn't take the same
40 Foreman:	[nah [nah aluminum is a lot softer than steel=
41 Construction worker IV:	=ah sure but I just thought that since they made it then (.) it could=
42 Foreman:	=aluminum is made for hand shuttering where there is no crane and foundations and all that where we drag it around along the ground (.) but typically we do have a crane for dragging it around anyway (1.0) ((nods emphatically while looking Construction worker IV directly into the eyes)) (2.0)
43 Construction worker IV:	*yeah*
44 Foreman:	*yes* ((nodding at Construction worker IV)) that there might not be TIME to wait for the crane to arrive (.) that's another matter ((shifts gaze to The facilitator)) (4.0)

In turn 37, Construction worker IV makes a new, more direct point regarding the shuttering. This is a direct challenge to the earlier epistemic claims by the



foreman, again translating into the point that it makes no sense that aluminium shuttering exists and is produced unless it works. The foreman again (turn 38) states that it cannot be done on that type of wall, but then towards the end of the turn inserts "or you can but" as a weaker side remark implying that practice dictates the usage of steel. This insert or embracement is, however, disregarded from the conversation. Construction worker IV also seems not to notice it, repeating his earlier statement (turn 39). The foreman himself even disregards the insert on turn 40, and focuses on the face-saving part of Construction worker IV's remark stating that he did not learn it at school. At this point, the foreman changes focus to the low deontic stance taken by Construction worker IV and with his "nah, nah", he accommodates this deontic claim. By this, Construction worker IV is excused for presenting and supporting the idea. On the next turn (40) Foreman restates his claim. This is, however, followed by Construction worker IV's sixth restatement, which shows that Construction worker IV has a hard time, letting the foreman's epistemic claim stand. In this restatement, he points out that it would be meaningless to make the aluminium shuttering if it did not work, and as such challenges the foreman's epistemic claim.

As Goffman (1982) describes, people may show their moral infringement through restatements and challenges. This sixth restatement suggests that it offends

his moral that Foreman makes a deontically based decision wrapped in an epistemic claim. Particularly Construction Worker IV and to some degree Construction worker III and OHS Manager II repeatedly poses lowered deontic stanced epistemic order questions to the foreman, perhaps seeking to invite him into a more epistemic discussion of the possibilities without threatening his face deontically. The foreman is, however, dismissive of this. In several situations, he modifies his epistemic claims that aluminium is not possible to use, while maintaining his dismissive deontic stance. This underlines an interpretation that the foreman uses his deontic status to make decisions regarding the suggested solution to the physical challenge, rather than engaging with the suggested idea and investigating the actual possibilities. On turn 42, Foreman directly addresses and puts down the challenge through emotional, epistemic and deontic means – he makes the same statement that he did before, this time with more emphasis. Foreman's pace of talk has picked up, he now overlaps the other's turns, and "latches" his turns closely onto Construction worker IV's (turn 41) looking Construction worker IV directly into his eyes, indicating an aggravated stance, likely in response to the repeated epistemic challenges. He states the usage of aluminium and ends staring into the eyes of Construction worker IV, who hesitantly consents. Foreman then finishes with a "yes", before formulating that the crane might not always be available (a circumstance which would support the employees' assessment of the task as strenuous), but that this is another issue than the material of the shuttering. However, as Foreman again shifts his gaze towards the facilitator and gives up the conversational floor (as indicated by the long ensuing pause), he projects the termination of

the discussion of shuttering, rather than a change of subject towards the availability of cranes.

Excerpt 7

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45 OHS manager I:           [ yes
46 Construction worker III: [ ((gazing down at table)) well then we learned
                             something new today too
47 OHS manager I:           yeheah
((Construction worker III collects the materials he has received at the beginning
of the workshop))
48 OHS manager I:           ((elbow on table, rests chin on hand)) well we can
                             still keep working on it because there's still eh
                             technical assistive devices how we handle it [ and so
                             on
47 The facilitator:         [ yes
48 Foreman:                 sure
49 OHS manager I:           it's not that it's dead yet=
50 Facilitator:             =no=
51 OHS manager I:           =I think=
52 Facilitator:             =nah=
53 OHS manager I:           =now it's up to you to decide what to choose
                             ((abbreviated))
((Construction worker III is staring firmly at a point in the ceiling. Construction
worker IV is staring down at his fingers fiddling the pen. Facilitator is leaned
against a bookcase.))

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Finally, Construction worker III (turn 46) sums up a conclusion on behalf of the participants, in turn starting to repair the facial damage taken by the participants result from Foreman's statements. His turn can be seen as speaking to all three orders, where the participants may have learned that they have no influence (deontic), something about aluminium shuttering (epistemic), and that the participants must let go of their sense of right and wrong and accept that they have nothing to say in this case (emotional). OHS manager I follows up on the face-repairing practice by suggesting that the participants focus on technical assistive devices instead (48). The facilitator agrees,



and Foreman as well. Then on turn 51, OHS manager I says that the topic is not “dead”, which is very much the opposite of what the atmosphere in the room indicates. Engagement is gone. The facilitator, invested in creating solutions for the research project, conforms to OHS manager I’s remark, and she goes on to state that the field is open and now they can just choose what to go on working on. The (once) engaged workers in particular – Construction worker I, Construction worker III and Construction worker IV have, however, somewhat lost face. Not only as capable and knowledgeable workers but also as meaningful participants in the workshop and the decision making on how to work in a less physically straining way. The facilitator and OHS manager I have lost face as facilitators of meaningful participatory processes and OHS improving initiatives.

Concluding discussion

As stated, the aim of this study is to investigate how face concerns arise in the context of a participatory workshop setting, which is part of an organisational intervention concerning OHS among construction workers, and how participants navigate the overt as well as the potential threats to their public selves. The analysis shows how the participants’ efforts to maintain their face shape a critical sequence of interactions within this setting, which affects the outcome of the overall OHS intervention. While we have focussed on a sequence spanning only a few minutes of talk, it is relevant to note that in the rest of the workshop, limited attempts were made by the participants to come up with ideas, except for “paying better *attention*”, which earlier research has shown ineffective in decreasing physical exertion (Brandt *et al.* 2018).

By applying a CA-inspired perspective, the situation can be assessed as face-threatening in a Goffmanian sense, due to how participants orient to it. This may be legitimate organisationally, but it is devastating to the participatory process because the workers lose face in several ways. (1) They are exposed as someone, who do not know a lot about shuttering. As emphasised particularly by Construction worker IV, this is not compatible with a self-perceived status as an educated concrete worker – they did not learn at school. As such, it is incompatible with their senses of selves, and is therefore connected with discomfort for the workers, indicated by their many attempts to open up the epistemic order of the discussion. (2) They are deontically dominated by their foreman and put into place. This causes them to lose face as being treated

like unruly children is incompatible with a masculine construction worker identity, which has been studied elsewhere (Wolkowitz 2006). (3) They may feel fooled by their own engagement in the participatory process even though they initially expressed reservations that “the high *lords*” would not accept anything costing money. This may cause them to feel naïve, which is again not a positive characteristic to publicly display in most lines of identity.

As Roskam describes, one of the ambitions of participatory action research paradigms is to redistribute influence between workers and management (Roskam 2009). Our study can be seen as a concrete example of how this ambition does not necessarily come easy. Investigating participatory processes on a larger scale with a similar analytical framework may contribute to explaining the mixed results of participatory OHS interventions in the construction industry (e.g. Dale *et al.* 2016, Brandt *et al.* 2018). Also, this may contribute to pinpointing, why stronger social identification with gang colleagues than with management (Andersen *et al.* 2015) is (re)configured in communicational practice. It is indeed a problem, if workers are invited to gain influence and end up losing face from engagement. Loss-of-face and disagreements have the potential to disengage employees, if they expect rejections of their suggestions or participating in the discussion, as also pointed out by Morrison (2011).

Perhaps less obvious is Foreman’s risk of losing face. This is unfortunate situation may be caused by several factors. (1) He was not present during the workshop’s initial phases, where the aluminium shuttering idea was developed. As a consequence, he has not been part of the research of available products and may not feel ownership to the idea, as supported in the findings of Strumińska-Kutra (2016). (2) Foreman may feel challenged because he feels his role as a competent foreman is challenged by the suggestion of alternatives to the practices he has been a part of. His ability to make decisions as a manager is threatened, which might aggravate the situation. This is not unlikely, knowing the usual managerial culture of the construction industry: as Thiel describes, management in construction is generally a highly emotional, aggressive and masculine space (Thiel 2012). Even though this is a known practice, it poses a problematic issue as deontic positioning may be valued higher than knowledge about solutions that may improve OHS. (3) The foreman may feel his face as a competent foreman is threatened towards hierarchically higher placed levels of management, as usual practice dictates the

usage of the cheaper steel shuttering while also threatened by the fact that the company has a policy of putting OHS above profit and economic regards. This shows that participation is not unproblematic for managers either, although the tendency within the literature has been to view managers as relatively unaffected by their roles in participatory settings.

In addition, Roskam describes that establishing relationships with both workers and managers is an important part of the research. While she suggests that overcommitting as a researcher may be problematic because the participants, both managers and employees, must be engaged and committed to any changes they decide to implement or not (Roskam 2009). In the present study, the researchers had already developed a relationship with both OHS managers and the foreman. However, the study still shows how positive expectations to commitment and engagement based on this relationship may be circumvented by unexpected turns of events, and by stakeholders who change their plans at the final critical moments. What constitute a “good” or sufficient relationship between researchers and participants may be interesting to investigate. The situation affirms Beirne’s point that managerial participation in participatory research may cause problems related to employee influence (Beirne 2008). At the same time, it also shows the risk of not including managers as lacking shared understanding of solutions and goals from management may prevent organisational engagement as Strumińska-Kutra (2016) suggests. This study contributes with insights on how to handle managers’ socio-affective engagement in the participatory process. As does it show that insisting on the participation of management at the right time in the right way is needed, if changes are to be implemented. In relation to the OHS literature, the study highlights the importance of managing the socio-affective aspect of participatory action processes. First off, our findings suggest that future research may benefit from systematically reviewing the micro-social interactions in participatory processes in order to discover the more generalisable qualities of communicational practices and their impact on the overall interventions. On a more practical note, it may be suggested that performing initial analysis of whom and how different parties may be putting their faces at risk, deontically, epistemically and emotionally, in participatory processes is viable. In this way, researchers or facilitators may be explicitly aware of the lines which the respective parties may be interested in maintaining, and may be able to take particular care in planning how they wish to support, challenge or postpone the handling of these lines. This may pose some challenges to

future interventions but can also support fruitful discussions among facilitators before engaging with participatory processes. Based on this study, it would seem that facilitators could benefit from being able to question what seems to be deontically based statements, not necessarily with epistemically stronger claims, but also by pointing out epistemic uncertainties.

Importantly, the CA approach is limited in lack of focus on the context outside the particular interaction. This means that other discussions, cultural norms and participant’s rationalities, which may be based on things, they wish to achieve or maintain outside the conversation, are outside the scope of CA analyses. In order to account for such relevant on-goings, other methods have to be applied.

The interactional analyses presented here show the participants’ orientations and negotiations, and as the CA approach we employ is foreign to both the OHS and participatory literature, it provides a potential resource for theoretical refinement within these fields by engaging closely with phenomena that have thus far mostly been studied through interview and survey methods. For example, while previous studies have described that managers may hamper participatory processes by their lack openness to employees’ suggestions (Morrison 2011), our approach shows how Foreman’s accounts are specifically designed to “naturalize” his own position and potentially downplay the employees’ concerns. This “management of meaning” has so far received little attention in the literature, though it is likely to play an important role in how employees perceive their manager’s stance. Developing methods that turn managerial emphasis towards epistemic matters rather than deontic domination may be a way of improving future interventions and improvements regarding OHS in the construction industry.

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